

Cultivating A Sustainability Ethos: Employee Engagement for Organisational Impact

B K, Lavanya¹ and K, Priyanka²

¹Asst. Professor, Department of Business Administration, SSMRV College, Jayanagar,
Bangalore

²1st Sem MBA Student, Indian Institute of Management Visakhapatnam

Abstract

In an era where sustainability is paramount, organisations are seeking ways to embed eco-friendly practices into their DNA. This secondary research study explores the pivotal role of employee engagement in cultivating a sustainability ethos, driving organisational impact. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature and case studies, we identify key strategies for fostering a culture of sustainability, the influence of leadership, and the tangible outcomes of employee-driven initiatives. Our research highlights best practices, challenges, and opportunities for organisations to harness the power of employee engagement, ultimately informing a roadmap for sustainable organisational transformation. By synthesising insights from secondary sources, this study provides a nuanced understanding of how employee engagement can drive sustainability in organisations, offering actionable recommendations for practitioners and researchers alike. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on sustainability and organisational change, providing a foundation for future studies on employee engagement and eco-friendly practices.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Organisational Change, Eco-friendly Practices, Leadership Influence, Sustainability Ethos, Organisational Impact.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's world, sustainability has become very important for every organisation.

Sustainability means using resources in a careful way, reducing waste, and protecting the environment for the future. Companies

are now expected to think beyond profits and also focus on social and environmental responsibility. Many organisations are trying to adopt eco-friendly practices such as saving energy, reducing pollution, and using sustainable materials in their daily operations.

However, sustainability cannot become successful only through rules or policies. It needs to become a part of the organisation's culture. For this, employees play a major role. Employee engagement refers to how involved, motivated, and committed employees are towards their work and the organisation's goals. When employees feel connected to their organisation, they are more willing to participate in activities that support sustainability.

Engaged employees can bring new ideas, take responsibility, and actively support green initiatives at the workplace. They help in creating a positive environment where sustainability becomes a shared effort rather than a top-down instruction. Leadership also matters in this process, as managers and leaders can encourage employees by setting an example and supporting sustainable behaviour.

Employee engagement is also closely linked to organisational effectiveness. Organisational effectiveness means how well an organisation achieves its objectives and performs successfully. When employees are engaged and work together for sustainable goals, it can improve productivity, teamwork, and long-term organisational growth. Sustainability initiatives driven by employees can also enhance the organisation's reputation and create a stronger impact on society.

Therefore, this study focuses on understanding how employee engagement helps in building a sustainability ethos within organisations. By reviewing existing literature and case studies, the paper highlights the importance of employee participation in achieving sustainable organisational transformation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Çop, S., Olorunsola, V. O., & Alola, U. V. (2020) examine how organisations can achieve environmental sustainability through green transformational leadership. The authors explain that leaders play an important role in encouraging employees to adopt eco-friendly behaviour at the workplace. The study focuses on green work

engagement, which refers to employees showing dedication and involvement in environmental practices. Using data from hotel employees in Turkey, the findings show that green transformational leadership increases employee engagement and strengthens green team resilience. The paper highlights that engaged employees are more willing to support sustainability efforts such as waste reduction, energy conservation, and responsible workplace practices. Overall, the study suggests that sustainability becomes stronger when leaders actively motivate employees and build a supportive green culture within the organisation.

2. Adnan, N., Bhatti, O. K., & Baykal, E. (2022) explore how ethical leadership influences workplace engagement in multicultural organisations. The study explains that employee engagement often becomes weaker when leaders fail to create trust, fairness, and transparency in the workplace. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, the authors conducted interviews with leaders from different cultural contexts to understand how ethical behaviour impacts employee involvement. The findings highlight that ethical leaders act as role models by

showing honesty, integrity, responsibility, and justice. When employees feel that their leaders are ethical and supportive, they become more motivated, committed, and engaged in their work. Overall, the study suggests that ethical leadership is an important factor in creating a positive organisational culture and strengthening employee engagement.

3. Russello, P. (2023) explains that sustainability becomes truly effective in organisations only when it is embedded into organisational culture and everyday employee behaviour. The study highlights that many organisations adopt sustainability policies, but they often struggle to integrate them fully into workplace practices. Through a detailed review and qualitative research across Italian companies, the author identifies employee engagement as a key driver in building a long-term sustainability culture. The paper also introduces a maturity model that helps organisations understand different stages of sustainability integration and how employee involvement supports progress over time. Russello points out that leadership commitment, clear communication, and structured sustainability practices are essential to motivate

employees and make sustainability part of the organisation's identity. Overall, the study suggests that sustainability transformation becomes stronger when employees actively participate and sustainability is treated as a shared organisational value.

4. Adeniyi, I. S., Hamad, N. M. A., Adewusi, O. E., Unachukwu, C. C., Osawaru, B., Onyebuchi, C. N., Omolawal, S. A., Aliu, A. O., & David, I. O. (2024) discuss how organisational culture and leadership development are closely connected and play an important role in shaping employee behaviour and workplace effectiveness. The authors explain that organisational culture includes shared values, beliefs, and practices that influence how employees work and interact. The study highlights that leadership development is essential because leaders guide employees, create trust, and build a supportive environment. The paper also points out that human resource practices such as training, communication, and employee involvement help strengthen organisational culture and improve employee engagement. When leaders promote fairness, ethical behaviour, and participation, employees feel more

motivated and committed to organisational goals. Overall, the study suggests that strong leadership and a positive organisational culture are key foundations for long-term organisational success and sustainable growth.

5. Agarwal, N., & Rajak, B. K. (2024) explain how employee engagement influences sustainable practices within organisations. The authors highlight that sustainability initiatives cannot be successful only through management policies, but require active participation from employees at all levels. The study discusses that engaged employees are more likely to support eco-friendly activities, contribute innovative ideas, and take responsibility for sustainability goals in the workplace. The chapter also suggests that organisations can strengthen sustainability outcomes by creating a positive work environment where employees feel valued and motivated. Employee engagement helps organisations improve not only environmental performance but also organisational reputation and long-term effectiveness. Overall, the study supports the idea that employee engagement acts as a key driver in embedding sustainability into organisational

culture and achieving meaningful organisational impact.

6. Aladwan, S. I., & Ali, A. J. (2024) examine how human resource management practices help in building organisational trust among employees, with employee engagement playing an important supporting role. The study focuses on the Jordanian construction sector and explains that trust is essential for employees to work together, share information, and remain committed to organisational goals. The authors highlight that HRM practices such as recruitment, training, performance management, compensation, and workplace safety improve employee engagement and strengthen trust within organisations. The paper also emphasises the role of internal communication, stating that clear and transparent communication helps employees feel informed, valued, and involved in organisational decisions. Overall, the study suggests that employee engagement and strong communication systems are key drivers in creating a trustworthy and effective organisational culture, which is also important for long-term sustainability.

7. Gaur, A., & Gupta, D., (2024) explore how employee engagement is influenced by

work-life balance and corporate culture within organisations. Through their literature review, the authors explain that employees are more engaged when they feel supported both professionally and personally. The study highlights that good work-life balance improves employee well-being, satisfaction, and motivation, which leads to stronger commitment towards organisational goals. The authors also point out that corporate culture plays an important role, as organisations with open communication, supportive leadership, and positive values create an environment where employees feel valued and encouraged to contribute. Overall, the study suggests that focusing on employee well-being and a healthy workplace culture is essential for building an engaged workforce and improving long-term organisational effectiveness.

8. Gusain, M., & Gujral, H. K. D. H. K. (2024) study the role of employee engagement and gender diversity in creating an inclusive organisational culture. The authors explain that organisations today must ensure employees feel valued, respected, and included, as inclusivity supports innovation, collaboration, and long-term organisational growth. The study

highlights that engaged employees develop a strong sense of belongingness, which helps in building a positive workplace culture where everyone contributes equally. The authors also find that gender diversity improves creativity and decision-making by bringing different perspectives into the organisation. Leadership support is emphasised as important in promoting fairness, open communication, and psychological safety. Overall, the study suggests that employee engagement and inclusive practices strengthen organisational culture and contribute to sustainable and socially responsible workplaces.

9. Lo, Y., Lu, C., Chang, Y., & Wu, S. (2024) examine how organisational commitment influences service quality, with job involvement acting as an important mediating factor. The authors explain that employees who feel emotionally connected and committed to their organisation are more likely to perform effectively and deliver better service. The study highlights that job involvement, which refers to the level of personal attachment employees have towards their work, strengthens the relationship between commitment and performance outcomes. The paper also

discusses the role of organisational climate, stating that a supportive work environment further improves employees' motivation and service standards. Emotional labour is also identified as an important factor, as employees in service roles often manage emotions to maintain quality interactions. Overall, the study suggests that organisational effectiveness and high performance are strongly influenced by employee commitment, involvement, and a positive workplace climate.

10. Pass, S., Liu-Smith, Y. L., Ridgway, M., & Kougiannou, N. (2024) discuss how employee engagement plays an important role in sustaining workplace success and improving organisational performance. The authors explain that engaged employees are more likely to share innovative ideas, collaborate effectively with colleagues, and maintain consistent productivity. The report highlights that employee engagement is not only beneficial for job satisfaction but also strongly connected to organisational resilience and long-term growth. The study also points out that leadership and managerial support are key drivers of engagement, as employees feel more valued when organisations prioritise wellbeing,

development, and psychological safety. Overall, the report suggests that employee engagement is essential for organisational effectiveness and helps organisations build sustainable workplace success in the long run.

11. Alemu, B. A. (2025) explains that sustainability is no longer an optional idea for organisations, but has become an important business need. The study focuses on how organisational values and leadership play a major role in building a culture of sustainability within companies. The author highlights that leaders, especially transformational leaders, can inspire employees to take part in eco-friendly practices and support sustainability goals in their daily work. The paper also points out that organisations with strong sustainability values such as social responsibility, innovation, and adaptability are more successful in maintaining long-term sustainable initiatives. At the same time, the study mentions that organisations often face challenges like limited resources, resistance to change, and misalignment between sustainability goals and workplace practices. Overall, the study suggests that sustainability becomes stronger when

leadership commitment and organisational values are properly aligned with employee involvement.

12. Banerjee, J. (2025) highlights the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on organisational culture and employee engagement beyond profit-making goals. The study explains that CSR initiatives help organisations create a sense of purpose among employees, as workers feel proud to be part of a socially responsible organisation. The author suggests that CSR activities strengthen employee motivation, loyalty, and commitment by aligning organisational values with social and environmental responsibilities. The paper also points out that CSR contributes to building a positive organisational culture where employees are more willing to participate in meaningful initiatives. Overall, the study indicates that CSR plays an important role in improving employee engagement and supporting sustainability-oriented organisational effectiveness.

13. Caldeira, R., & Infante-Moro, A. (2025) explain that ethics and ethical leadership are closely connected to organisational sustainability. The authors

highlight that organisations cannot achieve long-term sustainability only through environmental policies, but also through strong ethical values and responsible leadership. The study shows that ethical leaders influence employee behaviour by creating trust, fairness, and moral responsibility in the workplace. When leaders behave ethically, employees feel more motivated, committed, and willing to participate in eco-friendly actions and voluntary sustainability initiatives. The paper also emphasises that ethics-based leadership strengthens organisational culture, improves reputation, and supports sustainable growth. Overall, the study suggests that sustainability becomes stronger when leadership is guided by ethical principles and employees are aligned with organisational values.

14. Sethumadhavan, R. P. P. S., Sajimon, P. P., Selvakumar, P., Kadu, S. G., Chandel, P. S., & Gupta, S. (2025) examine how employee participation influences environmental sustainability within organisations. The authors explain that sustainability efforts become more effective when employees are actively involved in eco-friendly workplace activities

such as waste reduction, recycling, and energy-saving initiatives. The study highlights that employee participation is strongly linked to organisational support, communication, and training, as employees need awareness and opportunities to contribute. When organisations encourage employees to take part in sustainability programmes, it creates a stronger culture of environmental responsibility. Overall, the study suggests that employee participation is essential for achieving long-term environmental sustainability and embedding eco-friendly practices into organisational culture.

15. Usman, M., & Raza, B. (2025) study how organisations can achieve sustainability in supply chains through green leadership, organisational culture, and employee engagement. The authors explain that sustainable practices become more effective when leaders encourage employees to think and act in environmentally responsible ways. The study highlights that green transformational leadership motivates employees, supports green knowledge sharing, and promotes pro-environmental behaviour at the workplace. The authors also show that organisational culture plays a key

role, as a sustainability-focused culture encourages employees to actively participate in green initiatives. Overall, the study suggests that sustainability goals in supply chains can be achieved more strongly when employees are engaged and supported by leadership and a positive organisational environment.

3. RESEARCH GAP

Existing studies clearly show that sustainability has become an important goal for organisations, and employee engagement plays a key role in supporting sustainable practices. Many researchers have explained how leadership, organisational culture, ethical behaviour, HR practices, and employee participation influence sustainability outcomes. These studies also highlight that engaged employees contribute positively towards eco-friendly initiatives, organisational trust, workplace success, and long-term organisational effectiveness.

However, much of the existing research focuses on sustainability and employee engagement as separate areas or studies them only in specific sectors such as hotels, construction, or supply chains. There is still limited research that brings these concepts together to understand how employee

engagement can directly help in cultivating a sustainability ethos across organisations as a whole. In addition, many organisations continue to face challenges in embedding sustainability deeply into their organisational culture through employee-driven involvement.

Therefore, there is a need for a more integrated understanding of how employee engagement can act as a central driver in building sustainability-oriented organisational transformation. This study aims to address this gap by synthesising literature and case-based insights to provide a clearer roadmap for organisations to strengthen sustainability through employee engagement.

4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Sustainability has become a major priority for organisations today, as companies are expected to adopt eco-friendly practices and contribute positively towards society and the environment. Many organisations have introduced sustainability policies and initiatives, but they often struggle to implement them effectively in day-to-day operations. In many cases, sustainability efforts remain limited to management

decisions or formal programmes without active involvement from employees.

Employee engagement is an important factor in making sustainability a part of organisational culture. When employees are motivated, committed, and involved, they are more likely to support sustainable practices and contribute to long-term organisational impact. However, many organisations face challenges in engaging employees meaningfully in sustainability initiatives, and there is still a lack of clear understanding of how employee engagement can help cultivate a strong sustainability ethos within organisations.

Therefore, the problem addressed in this study is the need to explore how employee engagement can drive sustainability-focused organisational change and help organisations embed sustainability into their core values and workplace practices.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To understand the role of employee engagement in cultivating a sustainability ethos within organisations.
2. To explore how leadership and organisational culture influence employee involvement in sustainability practices.

3. To identify key strategies and best practices that encourage employees to actively participate in eco-friendly initiatives.
4. To examine the organisational impact of employee-driven sustainability efforts on long-term effectiveness and change.
5. To provide actionable recommendations for organisations to strengthen sustainability through employee engagement.

6. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on understanding how employee engagement contributes to building a sustainability ethos within organisations. The scope of the study is limited to secondary research, based on the review of existing literature, research articles, and case studies related to sustainability practices, employee involvement, leadership influence, and organisational culture.

The study covers key areas such as employee participation in eco-friendly initiatives, the role of ethical and transformational leadership, and the organisational outcomes of sustainability-driven engagement. It also examines how engaged employees can support long-term

organisational effectiveness and sustainable transformation.

Since the study is based on secondary sources, it does not include primary data collection such as surveys or interviews. The findings of this research aim to provide a conceptual understanding and practical recommendations that can help organisations strengthen sustainability through employee engagement.

7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has certain limitations that should be considered while interpreting the findings. First, the research is based only on secondary sources such as published journal articles, reports, and case studies. Since no primary data was collected through surveys or interviews, the study may not reflect the direct opinions or experiences of employees and organisations.

Second, the findings are dependent on the availability and quality of existing literature, which may vary across different industries and organisational contexts. The study also does not focus on a specific sector or region, so the conclusions may not be equally applicable to all types of organisations.

Lastly, sustainability and employee engagement are broad concepts, and

organisations may implement them differently based on their culture, leadership style, and resources. Therefore, further empirical research is needed to validate the insights of this study through real-world organisational data.

8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study follows a secondary research methodology to understand the role of employee engagement in cultivating a sustainability ethos within organisations. Secondary research involves collecting and analysing information that is already available through existing sources rather than gathering new data directly from respondents.

The study is based on a comprehensive review of published journal articles, research papers, reports, and relevant case studies related to sustainability practices, employee engagement, leadership influence, and organisational culture. These sources were selected using keywords such as employee engagement, sustainability ethos, organisational change, leadership, and eco-friendly practices.

The literature was analysed to identify key themes, strategies, challenges, and outcomes associated with employee-driven

sustainability initiatives. By synthesising insights from multiple studies, the research aims to provide a clearer understanding of how organisations can strengthen sustainability through employee engagement. Since the study is conceptual in nature, it does not include primary data collection methods such as surveys, interviews, or experiments. The findings are intended to offer theoretical understanding and practical recommendations for organisations and future researchers.

9. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Since this study is based on secondary research, the data analysis is done through the interpretation of existing literature, research findings, and case-based insights. The reviewed studies provide a clear understanding of how employee engagement supports sustainability practices and contributes to organisational effectiveness. The major insights from the literature are interpreted under the following themes:

9 (1) Drivers of Employee Engagement at the Workplace

The detailed analysis of the reviewed literature indicates that employee engagement is not a single outcome

influenced by one factor. It is a result of multiple organisational forces working together in a structured and consistent manner. Across studies, three major drivers repeatedly emerge: leadership behaviour, organisational culture, and human resource practices. These drivers shape how employees think, feel, and behave within the workplace.

● Leadership as a Foundational Driver

Leadership is identified as the primary catalyst for employee engagement. Transformational and ethical leadership styles are frequently associated with higher engagement levels. Leaders who communicate a clear purpose, demonstrate integrity, and show fairness create an environment of psychological trust. Trust becomes the foundation for engagement.

When leaders involve employees in decision-making processes, especially in areas like sustainability initiatives, employees feel that their opinions matter. This sense of participation increases ownership. Research shows that employees are more committed when they understand the vision of the organisation and see leaders actively practising what they preach. For

example, when leaders personally support green practices or ethical standards, employees are more likely to internalise these behaviours.

Leadership also influences emotional connection. Employees are not engaged only because of tasks, but because of relationships. Supportive leadership builds emotional safety, reduces fear of failure, and encourages innovation. Therefore, leadership drives engagement at both behavioural and emotional levels.

● **Organisational Culture as a Reinforcing System**

While leadership initiates engagement, organisational culture sustains it. Culture refers to shared values, norms, and everyday practices within the organisation. The literature indicates that cultures promoting openness, inclusiveness, fairness, and shared responsibility create stronger employee attachment.

When sustainability becomes embedded in organisational culture rather than existing as a separate policy, employees begin to see it as a collective responsibility. This reduces resistance and increases voluntary participation. Inclusive cultures also

increase belongingness, which directly affects engagement levels.

Psychological safety, which is often discussed in the literature, is another important cultural driver. Employees who feel safe to express ideas, suggest improvements, or question decisions without fear of punishment are more actively involved. This openness increases creative contribution and proactive behaviour.

Thus, culture acts as the environment that either strengthens or weakens the effect of leadership on engagement.

● **Human Resource Practices as Structural Support**

Human resource management practices provide the structural support that strengthens engagement. Training programmes improve employee competence and awareness, especially in sustainability-related areas. When employees understand the importance of environmental and social responsibility, they are more willing to participate.

Recognition and reward systems further motivate engagement. Studies indicate that appreciation, whether monetary or non-monetary, reinforces positive behaviour. Employees who see their contributions

being acknowledged are more likely to remain committed.

Internal communication is another important driver. Clear and transparent communication ensures that employees understand organisational goals, sustainability initiatives, and their individual roles in achieving them. Lack of communication often leads to disengagement due to confusion or misalignment.

Work-life balance and employee well-being policies also significantly influence engagement. Employees who experience burnout, stress, or imbalance are less likely to participate actively in additional initiatives like sustainability programmes. Therefore, supportive HR policies create stability, which strengthens long-term engagement.

● **Interconnection of Drivers**

A key insight from the analysis is that these drivers do not operate independently. Leadership shapes organisational culture. Culture influences how HR practices are implemented. HR practices reinforce behavioural expectations set by leadership. For example, a leader may promote sustainability, but without supportive HR policies and a culture of participation,

engagement levels may remain low. Similarly, strong HR policies cannot create engagement if leadership lacks credibility. Therefore, employee engagement emerges as a systemic outcome of aligned leadership behaviour, supportive culture, and structured HR practices. When these elements work together, employees move from passive participation to active commitment. This engagement becomes the foundation for supporting broader organisational goals, including sustainability initiatives.

9 (2) Impact of Sustainability Initiatives on Employee Engagement

The analysis of the reviewed literature indicates that sustainability initiatives do not only benefit environmental or social outcomes; they also significantly influence employee engagement within organisations. Sustainability initiatives create psychological, emotional, and behavioural responses among employees that strengthen their connection to the organisation.

● **Creation of Purpose and Meaning**

One of the strongest impacts identified in the literature is the creation of purpose. When organisations adopt sustainability practices such as waste reduction programmes, energy conservation policies,

green supply chains, CSR initiatives, and ethical sourcing, employees begin to see their work as meaningful beyond financial outcomes.

Research suggests that employees feel more motivated when they believe their organisation contributes positively to society and the environment. This sense of contributing to a larger cause increases emotional attachment and intrinsic motivation. Employees are no longer working only for salary or promotion, but also for a shared social responsibility. This deeper sense of meaning directly strengthens engagement.

● **Strengthening Organisational Pride and Identity**

Sustainability initiatives also improve organisational identity. When organisations are seen as socially responsible and environmentally conscious, employees feel proud to be associated with them. This pride enhances loyalty and commitment.

The literature indicates that employees who identify strongly with organisational values are more likely to demonstrate discretionary effort — meaning they go beyond their basic job responsibilities. Sustainability values strengthen this identification process by

aligning personal ethics with organisational mission.

Thus, sustainability initiatives enhance engagement by building emotional connection and positive organisational identity.

● **Encouraging Active Participation and Ownership**

Another major impact is the opportunity for participation. Sustainability initiatives often require cross-functional collaboration and employee involvement. Green teams, sustainability committees, volunteer programmes, and environmental campaigns give employees the opportunity to contribute ideas and take ownership of projects.

This participation increases psychological ownership. When employees are involved in planning and implementing sustainability actions, they feel responsible for outcomes. Research shows that ownership increases accountability, creativity, and proactive behaviour — all of which are strong indicators of engagement.

Instead of being passive recipients of policy decisions, employees become active contributors. This shift from passive compliance to active involvement significantly strengthens engagement levels.

● **Alignment of Personal and Organisational Values**

The literature also highlights the importance of value alignment. Many employees today value environmental protection and social responsibility in their personal lives. When organisational sustainability values match these personal beliefs, alignment occurs.

This alignment reduces internal conflict and increases commitment. Employees feel that their work environment reflects their personal ethics. Such congruence strengthens emotional stability and long-term attachment to the organisation.

If sustainability initiatives are authentic and consistently implemented, this alignment becomes stronger. However, if sustainability is treated only as a marketing strategy, employees may perceive it as superficial, which can reduce engagement. Therefore, authenticity plays a critical role.

● **Improvement of Teamwork and Collaboration**

Sustainability initiatives often require teamwork across departments. For example, implementing waste reduction strategies or green supply chain practices requires coordination among employees. This

collaborative effort strengthens interpersonal relationships.

The literature suggests that collaborative sustainability projects build collective engagement. Employees feel part of a larger team working towards a shared mission. This collective involvement improves communication, cooperation, and overall workplace morale.

● **Long-Term Engagement Impact**

The combined effect of purpose, pride, participation, alignment, and collaboration creates sustained engagement rather than temporary motivation. Sustainability initiatives influence both emotional and behavioural dimensions of engagement, making employees more committed in the long term.

Therefore, the analysis indicates that sustainability initiatives act as engagement-enhancing mechanisms. They strengthen employee connection to organisational goals, improve workplace morale, and build long-term commitment when implemented authentically and inclusively.

9 (3) Impact of Employee Engagement and Sustainability Initiatives on Organisational Effectiveness

The analysis of the literature clearly indicates that employee engagement and sustainability initiatives together create a strong impact on organisational effectiveness. Organisational effectiveness refers to how well an organisation achieves its goals, maintains performance, adapts to change, and sustains long-term growth.

● **Improvement in Employee Performance and Productivity**

Engaged employees are more focused, committed, and willing to put extra effort into their work. When sustainability initiatives are integrated into their roles, employees do not see them as additional tasks but as part of their responsibility. This increases accountability and consistency in performance.

Research suggests that engaged employees demonstrate higher levels of energy, dedication, and absorption in their work. When this engagement is linked with sustainability goals, employees contribute not only to operational efficiency but also to responsible practices such as reducing waste, improving resource utilisation, and supporting ethical standards.

As a result, organisational productivity improves in both financial and non-financial dimensions.

● **Strengthening Organisational Reputation and Stakeholder Trust**

The literature also shows that organisations that actively involve employees in sustainability initiatives build stronger reputations. When sustainability practices are supported internally by engaged employees, they appear more authentic externally.

Stakeholders, including customers, investors, and communities, tend to trust organisations that demonstrate genuine commitment to environmental and social responsibility. Engaged employees act as ambassadors of these values. Their behaviour reflects organisational credibility.

This improved reputation enhances competitive advantage and long-term stability, contributing directly to organisational effectiveness.

● **Building Organisational Culture and Internal Cohesion**

Employee-driven sustainability strengthens internal culture. When employees collectively work towards sustainable goals, it builds unity and shared responsibility.

This strengthens collaboration, teamwork, and trust across departments.

The literature indicates that strong internal cohesion reduces workplace conflict and increases collective problem-solving ability. Engaged employees are more willing to support organisational change, adapt to new sustainability policies, and help others adjust. Thus, sustainability-driven engagement creates a stable and supportive organisational environment, which improves overall effectiveness.

● **Enhancing Innovation and Adaptability**

Another important impact identified in the literature is increased innovation. Sustainability challenges often require creative thinking and new solutions. Engaged employees are more likely to suggest innovative ideas for improving environmental performance and operational efficiency.

Organisations with engaged employees are also more adaptable to regulatory changes, market expectations, and environmental pressures. Because employees are already aligned with sustainability values, they are more open to continuous improvement and long-term strategic changes.

This adaptability strengthens organisational resilience and long-term growth.

● **Long-Term Strategic Alignment**

When sustainability initiatives are supported by engaged employees, organisational strategies become more aligned with long-term objectives rather than short-term gains. Engagement ensures that sustainability goals are consistently implemented across different organisational levels.

The literature suggests that without employee engagement, sustainability policies often remain symbolic or limited to management decisions. However, when employees are actively involved, sustainability becomes embedded in everyday practices.

This integration of engagement and sustainability transforms organisational effectiveness from short-term performance to long-term sustainable success.

● **Overall Interpretation**

The combined effect of employee engagement and sustainability initiatives creates a cycle of positive organisational outcomes. Engagement strengthens sustainability implementation, and sustainability initiatives further reinforce engagement. Together, they improve

productivity, reputation, culture, innovation, and resilience. Therefore, employee engagement acts as a central mechanism that converts sustainability policies into effective organisational performance. Without engagement, sustainability remains theoretical. With engagement, it becomes operational and impactful.

10. FINDINGS

Based on the review and interpretation of existing literature, the study presents the following key findings:

1. Employee engagement plays a crucial role in promoting sustainability practices within organisations. Engaged employees are more likely to participate actively in eco-friendly initiatives and support sustainability goals.
2. Leadership has a strong influence on employee involvement in sustainability. Ethical and transformational leaders encourage employees by creating trust, motivation, and a shared sense of responsibility towards sustainable development.
3. Organisational culture is an important factor in embedding sustainability. Organisations that promote positive values, open communication, and employee

participation are more successful in building a sustainability-focused workplace environment.

4. Sustainability initiatives create a sense of purpose among employees. When employees feel that their organisation contributes positively to society and the environment, their commitment and engagement levels increase.

5. Employee-driven sustainability efforts contribute to organisational effectiveness. Engaged employees help organisations achieve better performance, stronger reputation, long-term growth, and improved workplace success.

6. Many organisations still face challenges in implementing sustainability through employee engagement due to lack of awareness, limited resources, and insufficient alignment between sustainability goals and employee involvement. Overall, the findings suggest that cultivating a sustainability ethos is not possible without meaningful employee engagement, supported by strong leadership and a positive organisational culture.

11. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following suggestions are offered for

organisations to strengthen sustainability through employee engagement:

1. Organisations should encourage active employee participation in sustainability initiatives by involving employees in planning and implementing eco-friendly practices at the workplace.
2. Leaders should promote sustainability values through ethical behaviour, motivation, and role modelling, as leadership support is essential for building a strong sustainability culture.
3. Organisations should provide training and awareness programmes to help employees understand the importance of sustainability and how their actions can contribute to organisational impact.
4. Clear and transparent communication should be maintained so that employees feel informed, valued, and connected to sustainability goals.
5. Organisations can create green teams or sustainability committees that allow employees to share ideas and take responsibility for environmental initiatives.
6. Employee contributions towards sustainability should be recognised and appreciated through rewards, incentives, or

acknowledgment, which can further improve engagement and commitment.

7. Sustainability goals should be aligned with organisational culture and long-term business strategies to ensure that eco-friendly practices become part of everyday work life.

Overall, organisations can achieve long-term sustainability impact by creating an engaged workforce supported by strong leadership, effective communication, and a sustainability-oriented organisational culture.

12. CONCLUSION

Sustainability has become an essential priority for organisations in today's world. However, it cannot be achieved only through policies or management decisions. It requires active involvement from employees and a workplace culture that supports eco-friendly practices.

This study highlights that employee engagement plays a vital role in cultivating a sustainability ethos within organisations. Engaged employees contribute positively by participating in green initiatives, supporting organisational values, and driving long-term sustainable transformation. Leadership and organisational culture are also important, as ethical and supportive leaders encourage

employee involvement and help embed sustainability into everyday workplace behaviour.

Through the review of existing literature and case-based insights, the study provides a clearer understanding of how organisations can strengthen sustainability through employee engagement. The findings suggest that meaningful employee participation, combined with strong leadership and effective communication, can improve organisational effectiveness and create lasting impact.

Overall, cultivating a sustainability ethos through employee engagement offers a valuable roadmap for organisations aiming to achieve sustainable growth and positive change in the long run. Future studies can further explore this relationship through primary research and real-world organisational data.

REFERENCES

1. Çop, S., Olorunsola, V. O., & Alola, U. V. (2020). Achieving environmental sustainability through green transformational leadership policy: Can green team resilience help? *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 30(1), 671–682.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.2646>
2. Adnan, N., Bhatti, O. K., & Baykal, E. (2022). A phenomenological investigation on ethical leadership and workplace engagement from a multi-cultural perspective. *International Journal of Ethics and Systems*, 38(4), 629–647.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOES-04-2022-0078>
3. Russello, P. (2023). *Embedding sustainability in organizational culture through employee engagement: A maturity model* [Master's thesis, Politecnico di Milano]. Politesi Repository.
https://www.politesi.polimi.it/bitstream/10589/215686/5/2023_12_Russello_Tesi_01.pdf
4. Adeniyi, I. S., Hamad, N. M. A., Adewusi, O. E., Unachukwu, C. C., Osawaru, B., Onyebuchi, C. N., Omolawal, S. A., Aliu, A. O., & David, I. O. (2024). Organizational culture and leadership development: A human resources review of trends and best practices. *Magna Scientia Advanced Research and Reviews*, 10(1), 243–255.

- <https://doi.org/10.30574/msarr.2024.10.1.0025>
5. Agarwal, N., & Rajak, B. K. (2024). How employee engagement influences sustainable practices in organizations. In *Planet prosperity: Achieving sustainable business growth* (pp. 48–58). Bloomsbury Publishing India Pvt. Ltd.
 6. Aladwan, S. I., & Ali, A. J. (2024). Cultivating employees' organizational trust through human resources management practices: The role of internal communication and employee engagement in Jordanian construction sector. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 14(11), 2735–2754. <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v14-i11/23388>
 7. Gaur, A., & Gupta, D. (2024). Enhancing employee engagement: Unveiling the impact of quality of work-life balance and corporate culture through literature review. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 6(2), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i02.15851>
 8. Gusain, M., & Gujral, H. K. (2024). Role of employee engagement and gender diversity in creating inclusive organizational culture. *International Journal of Research - GRANTHAALAYAH*, 12(5), 114–126. <https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v12.i5.2024.5617>
 9. Lo, Y., Lu, C., Chang, Y., & Wu, S. (2024). Examining the influence of organizational commitment on service quality through the lens of job involvement as a mediator and emotional labor and organizational climate as moderators. *Heliyon*, 10(2), Article e24130. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e24130>
 10. Pass, S., Liu-Smith, Y. L., Ridgway, M., & Kougiannou, N. (2024). Sustaining workplace success through employee engagement. *NBS Explore*, (1), 6–8. https://irep.ntu.ac.uk/id/eprint/53408/1/2426843_Liu-Smith.pdf
 11. Alemu, B. A. (2025). Cultivating a culture of sustainability: The role of organizational values and leadership in driving sustainable practices. *Business Ethics and Leadership*, 9(1), 79–94.

[https://doi.org/10.61093/bel.9\(1\).79-94.2025](https://doi.org/10.61093/bel.9(1).79-94.2025)

and *Administrative Sciences*, 5(2), 42–60. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.124>

12. Banerjee, J. (2025). The impact of CSR on organizational culture and employee engagement beyond profit. *Indian Journal of Law and Legal Research*, 6(6), 2210–2212.

<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5198816>

13. Caldeira, R., & Infante-Moro, A. (2025). The importance of ethics in organisations, their leaders, and sustainability. *Administrative Sciences*, 15(9), Article 372.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci15090372>

14. Sethumadhavan, R. P. P. S., Sajimon, P. P., Selvakumar, P., Kadu, S. G., Chandel, P. S., & Gupta, S. (2025). Environmental sustainability and employee participation. In *Green leadership strategies for increased employee engagement and performance* (pp. 275–298). IGI Global.

<https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3373-2106-6.ch009>

15. Usman, M., & Raza, B. (2025). Driving sustainable supply chains through green leadership, culture, and employee engagement. *Journal of Management*

Received: Mar 03, 2026

Accepted: May 01, 2026

Published: Jul 01, 2026

Cultivating A Sustainability Ethos: Employee Engagement for Organisational Impact, authored by Lavanya B K. and Priyanka K., is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) Published by ICERT.